



News Release

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Utahns Encouraged to Take Active Role in Preventing Pool Problems

Restrictions easing on Utah pools

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and local health departments announced today the easing of requirements for pool owners to hyperchlorinate pools and maintain higher levels of chlorine. The restriction from swimming continues for anyone who needs to wear diapers, regardless of age. And anyone who has had diarrhea should not swim for two weeks after the symptoms have ended. This announcement is to remind people that we still need their help to completely control this infection.

The restrictions were originally announced at UDOH by local health departments on Aug. 28 to control a statewide outbreak of cryptosporidiosis, an infection caused by a parasite that causes long-lasting, often debilitating diarrhea. While cases are still being reported, health officials report that the rate of new cases has slowed substantially.

“We are seeing decreased numbers of cases of illness being reported, although the incidence of cryptosporidiosis hasn’t been completely stamped out,” said Dr. Robert Rolfs, UDOH state epidemiologist. “With the reduced number of cases, we believe it is appropriate to remove the requirement for increased chlorine levels which can cause problems for pools and swimmers. It is important for the public to understand that completely controlling this outbreak will depend on people being willing to follow the appropriate hygiene measures.” State officials will continue to monitor the numbers and local health departments will reinstate stronger restrictions, if an increase appears.

Gary House, Director of the Weber/Morgan Health Department says, “We need the public’s help to completely eliminate this threat to health. That means preventing both person-to-person spread and keeping the crypto germ out of our pools.”

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Utahns can help accomplish that by:

- 1) Not swimming when sick with diarrhea or for at least two weeks after it has ended.
- 2) Not letting children who need diapers swim – that doesn't mean just taking the diapers off.
- 3) Shower before entering the pool and after using the bathroom. If you have children, make sure they shower well with soap and clean their bottom.
- 4) Wash hands carefully with soap after using the bathroom – every time!
- 5) If you see a fecal accident in the pool, tell the life guard or pool operator so they can take appropriate action to clean it up and prevent infections.

In past years, Utah has seen about 30 cases per year of cryptosporidiosis across the state. As of Tuesday, Oct. 9, UDOH has confirmed 1,818 cases – the majority occurring just since July. The parasite is most commonly spread through recreational water (which may include swimming pools).

People who are more likely to become seriously ill if exposed to cryptosporidiosis should still be extra careful and avoid public pools. Those at higher risk include:

- Young children and pregnant women. They may be more susceptible to the dehydration resulting from diarrhea, and should drink plenty of fluids while ill if they develop diarrhea.
- Anyone with a severely weakened immune system is at risk for more serious disease and should refrain from swimming until the outbreak is over. The symptoms will be more severe and could lead to serious or life-threatening illness. Examples of persons with weakened immune systems include those with HIV/AIDS; cancer and transplant patients who are taking certain immunosuppressive drugs; and those with inherited diseases that affect the immune system.

For more information about cryptosporidiosis, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/> or call your local health department.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.